

Sustaining the Mission

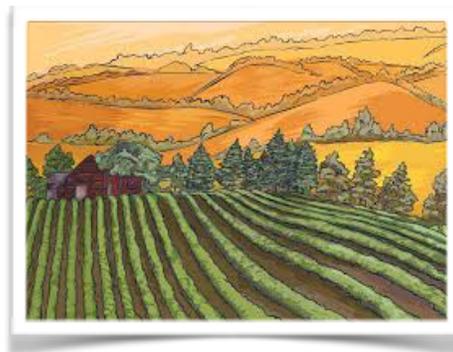
CLC Administration & Financial Co-Responsibility

Love consists in a mutual sharing, where the lover seeks to give the good things he possesses to the beloved.

*Spiritual Exercises of
St Ignatius*



Christian Life
Community
CANADA



Ignatian Mutuality

A vineyard, is a place of growth, yielding fruits necessary for life. As labourers in the vineyard, we make a difference in this world. We are involved in a living and life-giving project, a constructive task whose goal is to bear fruit for the Lord. We do not work alone. We are co-workers with God (1 Cor. 3:9). Although we plant and water, it is God who gives the increase. We do not just pass through this life, or simply weave baskets in the day and take them apart at night. Rather we are here to tend the garden and bear fruit, fruit that will last. The cultivator of a vineyard is an optimist, a labourer committed to the long haul, to patient, respectful cooperation with fellow labourers and with the Lord of the harvest. 102 J. Peter Schineller, SJ, "The Pilgrim Journey of Ignatius: From Solider to Labourer in the Vineyard and its Implications for Apostolic Lay Spirituality," "SSJ 31, no. 4 (September 1999), 10-11.

Reflection # 5 > CLC - Sustaining the Mission: Financial Co-Responsibility and Administrative Challenges

We asked our members four questions:

1. What were/are the graces of our current financial structure?
2. Are there any ways in which our financial structure could be made more efficient or effective in serving CLC Canada, its members and others?
3. How can we better foster a spirit of financial co-responsibility amongst our membership? Are there other models of co-responsibility that we can consider?
4. How has the financial framework changed over time? Are there any lessons to be learned in that history? NOTE: These responses have been woven into the summary of feedback given to questions 1 to 3.

Introduction:

Members' reflections on administration and financial co responsibility are again frank and sometimes contradictory. These areas of community interdependence are challenging in any organization. Generally members have again identified communication as an area of concern. Organizational consistency and transparency maintains trust. Changing demographics are a significant challenge for CLC Canada. What will CLC "look like" in five years?

Summary of Members' Feedback

1. What were/are the graces of our current financial structure?

- Having a consistent yearly deadline for fees.
- The change of wording from "donations" to "fees" or "dues" clarifies that set annual contributions are an expected part of membership in CLC Canada.
- The current financial contribution is affordable for most members. Understanding that there is flexibility if ability to pay is at issue.
- A Sense of stability in that monies have been set aside in Funds.
- The role of national treasurer has been simplified, which may help to fill this role.
- Charitable receipts are available for all contributions made to CLC Canada.
- A general sense that General Council uses funds wisely and responsibly.
- Appreciation for an online option of fees/contributions through Canada Helps.
- Transparency has helped GC recognise those who are financially contributing and those who are not.
- Gratitude for those who give far more than what is asked.
- Formation training – in Manual one, unit #13 before the initial commitment, people are clearly told and in writing what is expected in prayer and attendance commitment as well as financial responsibility.

2. Ways to make financial structure more efficient/effective?

- Some question whether the current membership fee amount is sufficient given reduced membership numbers, increased expenses and CLC goals (formation, in-person contacts with national president/EA, providing adequate support to World, National and Regional initiatives, etc.)
- Financial transparency is critical. Regular reporting on national and regional levels helps members understand our current financial situation, how funds are spent, shortfalls and reasons, expenses and needs. Transparency fosters trust and buy-in. Financial reporting must be easy to understand - one suggestion was a circle graphic to show how funds are being allocated.
- Having feasible financial goals each year and a clear budget which is communicated to membership.
- Some question whether we should centralize finances by eliminating the four regional treasurer positions. This would avoid duplication of roles and accounting systems, free those people up to discern other leadership positions and may ease difficulties in filling national treasurer position (ie. looking for one treasurer for CLC Canada, not 5).
- Suggest revisiting SOP for Funds such as John English Fund. When the fund was created the interest rates were high so the provision to spend the interest only if it reaches \$500 made sense. But now that the interest rates are historically low, the fund becomes too restricted to use. There is a need to further CLC formation and this fund is intended for this purpose. Suggestion to revisit and earmark portion of fund to spend on formation and answer needs across country as well as godparenting of Haiti (growing CLC outside of Canada).
- Some are concerned that dropping membership numbers in CLC Canada are not reflected in our required payments to World because World dues are fixed, based on national membership numbers for a five year period. Thus, there is concern CLC Canada is paying for those who are no longer members.
- Some suggest that CLC Canada consider a paid treasurer position and consider non-members for the position.
- Another suggestion is to have a treasurer-elect in reserve to ensure continuity and smooth transitions.
- Initiate fundraising as another means of meeting CLC's financial needs. Those who feel they cannot contribute financially may be better able to contribute by working at fund raisers, i.e. yard sales, raffles, etc.
- Consider a reduced membership fee for students to encourage and attract more young people to become a member of CLC.
- Some feel that the increased size of General Council and related expenses has not significantly strengthened CLC but rather weakened it. They suggest a smaller General Council may be able to connect, collaborate and network much more effectively with leadership groups across CLC.
- Suggest having honest and transparent discussions using the Rules for Almsgiving and the Magis when paying annual minimum membership fees and donating more.

3. How can we better foster a spirit of financial co-responsibility amongst our membership? Are there other models of co-responsibility that we can consider?

- Issue of non-paying members could have multiple causes, including a lack of formation in financial co-responsibility, communal stagnation, lack of understanding about use of funds or a lack of vocation to CLC. Some advocated regional executive and/or group guides take on greater role of approaching non-paying members and determining underlying causes. A personal approach may help address causes, heal any past hurts/misunderstandings about use of funds. However, it's acknowledged that these can be difficult conversations.
- Continue to encourage a communal approach to membership fees in the sense of each community being responsible for the group's total fee assessment, and publicize ways in which communities raise their contributions each year (small contribution made at each meeting, etc.)
- Ensure that financial co-responsibility is an integral part of formation in CLC Canada. This must be clearly explained before communities apply for membership/members make commitments. Financial co-responsibility should flow naturally where there is good formation and healthy CLC communities. Financial reality of CLC way of life is part of ownership of our vocation. CLC has very good formation resources on financial co-responsibility. These need to be better distributed, incorporated into manuals, published in newsletter, used as formation themes, etc.
- Clarity on contribution forms regarding allocation of yearly dues (i.e. portion to world, national and region), the existence of other funds one can donate to over and beyond the minimum annual fee.
- Regular reminders about annual fees are appreciated. They are also opportunities to promote donating to special projects/needs.
- Look at the Ignatian model of how the Jesuits set out to fund their enterprises and sustain their communal life.

Working Group's Recommendations:

Short-term actions

- Review current procedures for financial reporting. Have standardized timeframes for i) sending out membership reminders ii) sending out national budget and financial statements.
- Reassess our current membership fee to decide if it is an appropriate amount. Look at a reduced membership fee for students. Perhaps link the amount of dues to a member's income.
- Build on financial co-responsibility formation in Manual One, formation that highlights both the responsibilities and graces of community membership. Include documents such as Rules for Almsgiving and prayer and reflection exercises around this theme.

- Determine a consistent, transparent and compassionate National process to address members who haven't paid the year's dues.
- Continue to encourage a communal approach to membership fees and publicize ways in which communities raise their contributions each year.
- Determine any questions that need to be brought to the 2019 National Assembly for communal discernment. Ie. Rise of annual dues.
- Prepare a financial report for the 2019 National Assembly.
- The President sends an accompanying letter with the annual budget explaining the reasons for some of the significant spending choices and past shortfalls.
- Make a small list of financial needs where members could be approached to donate.

Long-term actions

- Revisit SOP for Funds.
- Write a clear description of the treasurer's role, which includes looking at the possibility of a paid position and non-CLC members filling the role, and begin the search for a treasurer-elect.
- Assess a simpler and more effective financial relationship between the National and Regions.
- Foster a sense of National belonging and community that will foster greater willingness to sustain it.
- Look at the issue of where and how the Regions and National are 'competing' for funds, if at all.